

780 J. H. Clifford
Sketches of the reciprocal Duties of a Christ-
ian PASTOR and PEOPLE.

S E R M O N,

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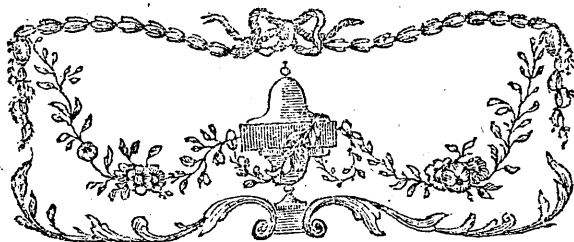
AS the following discourse may fall into the hands of some, who are not members of the society, to which it was delivered, and for whose use it is particularly designed, it may be thought necessary, that I make some apology for assenting to its publication; and especially so, on account of my young standing in the Ministry, and the subject treated of in the discourse. I have no apology to make, except the general desire and request of those, to whom the sermon was delivered, and a hope, that it may answer a good purpose, with respect to them and myself, by reminding us of our respective duties. The discourse is published, with very little alteration, from what it was, when first written. It was written without the most distant apprehension of its ever being published. This, and my own want of ability, are the only excuse, I have to offer for its imperfections.



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S E R M O N.



COLOSSIANS, iv. 17.

Take heed to the ministry, which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.



GREEABLY to the predictions of the ancient Prophets, the Messiah appeared, in our world, under a divine commission, to lay down his life for the redemption of sinners. The manner, in which he fulfilled the purposes of his mission, was expressive of his divine character and infinite benignity. After his resurrection, he sent forth his Apostles, into the different nations of the world, to preach repentance and remission of sins, in his name. To accomplish the purposes of divine grace, they were commissioned to ordain successors, in the work, in which they were engaged. In executing this part of their mission, the Apostles were cautious and faithful, in giving to their successors explicit instruction, relative to their duty.

Paul, in his letters to Timothy, describes what the character of a Christian Pastor ought to be; and, with accuracy, delineates his various duties. In his letter to the church at Colosse, after giving them various rules, for their faith and practice, he directs them to give the following admonition to Archippus, their Pastor and Teacher, *Take heed to the ministry, which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.* The term *Ministry*, as here used, may very well be considered, as comprehending all the duties, which belong to the office of a Christian Pastor. To these he is admonished to take heed. Then is one said to take heed, when he practises vigilance, is cautious, and pays strict attention. The phraseology of the text imports, that vigilance and strict attention are necessary, in order for one's performing the duties of the Pastoral Office. We are, hence, naturally led to attend to several things, which are implied, in taking heed to the Ministry, so as to fulfil it.

I. Taking heed to the Ministry, so as to fulfil it, implies, that the Christian Pastor, pay strict attention to his own heart, and see that it be rightly affected toward God and man.

Such is the influence of the heart, or mental taste, on the other faculties of the mind, and on the whole conduct of a man, that he never puts forth any great exertions to accomplish a work, to which his heart is opposed. One, who has no taste for music, never will become versed in the harmony of sounds. One, who has no taste for the mathematics, will never make any great proficiency, in

mathematical studies. He will attend to any of the branches of that science with reluctance. So one, who has no taste for theology, will never put forth those mental exertions, which are necessary to acquire a knowledge of theological subjects. If a Teacher of Christianity disrelish the duties and designs of his employment, he will never fulfil them. But no one will relish these, unless his heart be rightly affected toward God and man. It would be absurd to admit, that one, whose heart is at variance with the divine character and government, will relish an employment, which carries them in the very nature of it. Nor is the supposition less absurd, that one, whose heart is under the dominion of selfishness, will exert himself, in a work, every duty of which, carries in it impartial love to man. As a man's heart is, so will be his character. If that be destitute of grace, and not rightly regulated and established, he will be likely to be fiery and tenacious, in advocating the interest of a party; or he will be carried about by every wind of doctrine, and be as changeable as the fashion of the day.

A correct mental taste, is one essential and principal source, whence springs those mental and bodily exertions, and that attention, watchfulness, and stability of character, which are necessary, in order for one's fulfilling the Ministry. Men generally pursue, with diligence, activity and ardor, those employments, for which they have a relish of heart.

II. Taking heed to the Ministry, so as to fulfil it, implies, that the Christian Pastor be diligently

studious, and devote his time and attention to the acquisition of knowledge.

One may possess a pure heart, and yet be wholly incapable of fulfilling the Ministry. We might as well admit, that one, ignorant of the nature and properties of medicine, and of the nature and structure of the human body, is capacitated to practise the healing art, as that one, who has not a knowledge of Divinity, is capable of teaching it to others. Such is the structure of the human mind, and such the condition of man, in the present life, that he never makes much progress, in acquiring a knowledge of any art, or science, to which he does not devote his time and attention. It is not the lot of man, in this world, to acquire knowledge without diligence, study and exertion. Hence, we never see a man, versed in Astronomy, Politics, Medicine, Music, or Agriculture, who has not devoted his time, study and attention, to these branches of science. Hence, also, one never will acquire much knowledge of Divinity, unless he make that the object of his study and exertions.

One may acquire a knowledge of a few particular things, in almost any science, and yet be profoundly ignorant of that science. One may understand two or three of the problems in Euclid, and yet be profoundly ignorant of Geometry. The same is true in Divinity. One may have an accurate knowledge of some particular doctrines, and be able to speak upon them sensibly, and yet be grossly ignorant of the rest. No science opens a more extensive field, for the exercise of the mental

faculties, than that of Divinity. It opens a field, for the researches of the rational mind, boundless as the works of creation, extensive as the government of God, and unlimited as his perfections.

No one can make his profiting, as a religious Teacher, appear unto all men, by bringing from his treasure things new and old, unless he devote his time to the study of Divinity, and those sciences with which that is connected. Those things, of which the scriptures professedly treat, demand the attention of all moral beings; especially, do they demand the attention of the Christian Pastor. It is not to be thought strange, that a book so ancient as the Bible, and translated into a different language, from those in which it was originally written, should contain things not to be understood, without *much* study. A knowledge of the languages, in which the Scriptures were, at first, written, is of use, in ascertaining the just import of many parts of them. Frequent allusions are had, both in the Old Testament and New, to the then existing customs and manners of the Jews and Gentiles. Many of the Mosaic institutions, will appear unmeaning, or barbarous, to one unacquainted with the state and condition of the Jews, as to intellectual improvement and civilization; and also with the polytheistical schemes, embraced and practised upon, among their neighbors. As order appears most pleasing, when contrasted with confusion, and beauty, when placed beside deformity, so the peculiar worth and importance of the institutions of Moses, appear in the most striking point of light, when

compared, as to their intrinsic worth, and moral tendency, with the religions of the Canaanites, the Egyptians, and the other nations, who lived in the time of Moses, and of Christ and the Apostles. So frequent are the allusions, in the Old Testament and New, to the laws and practices of the nations of the East, and of the Greeks and Romans, that, without a knowledge of these, many parts of the Scriptures will appear obscure and inexplicable. Hence, the propriety and necessity of a public teacher of the doctrines of Revelation being acquainted with the history of past ages, and of nations, which have, long since, ceased to exist.

No one can reason accurately, on moral subjects, nor address men, in the manner best adapted to reach the heart, unless he be acquainted with the capacities and the passions of man, and the relations he sustains. To explain, with propriety, the doctrines of the Scriptures, it is necessary to understand the structure and principles of the human mind; and the difference of what belongs to man, as an intellectual, moral, and animal being. Unless one understand this, he will be liable to perpetual error, in his disquisitions on moral subjects, and in the judgment he forms of the goodness, or moral state of those, with whom he is conversant. Hence, it is necessary, that the Christian Pastor attend to the study of the mind, and acquire as accurate a knowledge of it, as the present state of things will admit.

At an age, like the present, when the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures are called in ques-

tion, it is necessary that those, who are professedly the friends of Christianity, be able to defend it against gainfayers. This is peculiarly necessary for him, who is a Teacher of Christianity. The sources of evidence, in support of the inspiration of the Scriptures, are numerous. A knowledge of them, and of the degree of evidence deducible from them, is obtained, by an attention to what the Bible contains, facts that have taken place in past ages, and events that are now taking place. To collect and arrange this evidence, requires an acquaintance, with the past and present history of the world, and an intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures, and human nature.

The weekly exercises, which, according to the present mode of instruction, are to be performed by a Preacher of the Gospel, are such, as demand diligence, study and labor. From these observations, we conclude, that no one can be said to take heed to the Ministry, so as to fulfil it, unless he be studious, and devote himself to the acquisition of knowledge. Hence, the propriety of the charge, which Paul gave to Timothy : *Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Meditate upon these things ; give thyself wholly to them.*

III. Taking heed to the Ministry, so as to fulfil it, implies, that a Pastor preach the religion of the Gospel.

The scheme of religion, contained in the Gospel, differs from every other scheme of religion, in this, it is a scheme of divine grace. It originated in the

love of God to the guilty ; and rests on this truth, that the human race deserve to suffer the penalty, by which the law of God is sanctioned, or everlasting punishment. Its fundamental doctrines are all of them doctrines of grace. Hence, the Apostle to the Ephesian Church observes, *By grace are ye saved, through faith ; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God : Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which he hath before ordained, that we should walk in them.* To the Galatians he saith, *I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God : For, if righteousness come by the law, then is Christ dead in vain.* To the Romans he observes, *Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them, who are under the law ; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.* From this he draws this conclusion, that we are *Justified freely by his grace ; through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.*

He, who, in his preaching, omits an attention to the doctrines of grace, and does not make them the foundation of his discourses, cannot be said to preach the Gospel. He, who, instead of preaching these, preaches the doctrines of men, or sentiments, which are not contained in the Gospel, and such as his own fancy may suggest, or such as are derived from some favorite author, exposes himself to the woes denounced against false teachers. *Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel than that, which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*

If, instead of making the Gospel, the Preacher make the reigning taste of the age, or the sentiments, which happen to be prevalent, the standard of his preaching, he is sure to be shipwrecked ; and, if he receive his just recompence of reward, he will fall into contempt among men.

To preach the Gospel in its purity, or as it came from God, it is necessary, that one lay open the perfections and character of Jehovah, as exhibited in revelation—the nature and extent of the divine law, and man's perpetual obligation to obey it—the nature of sin and of holiness, and the natural character and state of man—the atonement made by Jesus Christ, as the foundation of the sinner's justification, in the sight of God—the Divine Spirit, as the original and operating cause of the difference, as to moral character, between the faint and those who perish—and the inexcusableness of sinners, for delaying repentance and faith. In the scheme and work of redemption, which is, and forever will be, the admiration of all intelligences, the glory and perfection of the divine character and government, are more clearly exhibited, than in any, and every thing else.

While the faithful Pastor holds up the doctrines of divine grace, and makes them the foundation of his preaching, he will not fail to enjoin upon his hearers, the practice of all the social virtues, and all the relative duties, incumbent on man, in the present life. He will urge the practice of these, with energy and with the persuasive motives of revelation. He will call no man father, but he will make

Christ and the Apostles the standard of his sentiments and preaching. If one do not this, but form his discourses, in the atmosphere of heathen Philosophy, or according to the taste and sentiments, which may, at different periods, be in fashion, he is sure to silence the voice of conscience, in his hearers, and to prepare them for future sorrow.

Admit the propriety of these remarks, and it is easy to discern, that a public Teacher of religion, in order to fulfil the Ministry, must look into the Bible for the truths, sentiments and instruction, which he is to deliver to his hearers. You will hence discern, that I am under obligation to preach to you the doctrines of the Gospel, in their purity; and to keep back from you, no part of the revealed counsels of God. You will readily discern, that it is not for me to ascertain, first, whether this, or that doctrine of revelation be pleasing and acceptable to you, and this, or that displeasing, and then to select and preach the former, and omit the latter. You will unite in saying, that he who would do thus, ought to sink into contempt, and that he will have but an ill account to give of his stewardship, at the last day. You will unite in saying, Happy is that Preacher, who, at the close of his ministration, can say to the people of his charge, with the inspired Apostle, *I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you—I take you to record, this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God.*

IV. Taking heed to the Ministry, so as to fulfil it, implies, that a Pastor preach in a plain and convincing manner.

The instruction of the Scriptures, is designed for the unlearned, as well as for the man of letters. Hence, the design of publicly explaining them will be subverted, if it be in such a manner, as to be understood, only by those, whose minds are strengthened by study and science. No one is likely to have an auditory, the principal part of which, consists of such. It is hence necessary, that the Teacher of Christianity, adapt his discourses to the capacities and abilities of such, as are not in the highest state of intellectual improvement. It is necessary, that he be plain and explicit, in his illustrations of moral truths ; and that he make clear and accurate distinctions. Christ and the Apostles were very plain, in the manner of their instruction. Their hearers, though in a low state of mental improvement, were, in general, capable of understanding them. " I had rather," saith St. Paul, " speak five words with my understanding, that, by my voice, I might teach others, than ten thousand words, in an unknown tongue." One may preach this thing and that, but he will never convince those, before whom he speaks, unless he preach to *them*, and fix upon them the impression, that they are the persons and characters addressed.

The structure of the human mind is such, that it is much easier to make men feel, than to make them reason. A public speaker may, without difficulty, call into exercise many of the passions of

the human heart, and produce a very sensible effect upon his hearers. But, if he awake the passions, and fire the imagination, without informing the understanding, the effect will be transient, and attended with the phrenzy of enthusiasm. To lead men into the knowledge and practice of truth, it is necessary to address the understanding and the heart. Christ and the Apostles, while they informed their hearers, and exhibited divine truth to their understanding, awoke and called into exercise the feelings and affections of the heart, by bringing home to them the solemnly interesting doctrines of the Gospel. *The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.*

V. Taking heed to the Ministry, so as to fulfil it, implies, that the Christian Pastor administer the ordinances of the Gospel with fidelity, and exert himself to support the order and discipline of the church.

In doing this, the faithful Pastor will make the instruction of Christ and the Apostles his invariable guide. They have given no instruction, which authorises an administration of the ordinance of baptism to any, except believers and their infant seed. Those, who are admitted to the privileges of church membership, ought to be acquainted with the doctrines of the Gospel, and with the nature and design of covenanting; and they ought to give such evidence of their having put off the old man and his deeds, and of their willingness and determination to walk in newness of life, as shall

be satisfactory to the eye of charity and sound judgment.

In different persons, we are to expect to find different degrees of intellectual improvement. One may, from an attention to theological subjects, be able to reason upon them with accuracy, and yet be destitute of that mental taste, and those affections, which constitute the man of piety and goodness. The heart is to be considered, as the seat of moral exercises. As the relish of the heart is, so will be the affections; and as these are, so will be the determinations of the mind, and the conduct of the man. Hence, it is said, *A good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit: For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that, which is good; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that, which is evil.* To determine, therefore, who are to be admitted to fellowship, as Christian brethren, we are to look at the goodness of the heart, so far as we can ascertain it by its fruits, rather than to the strength and improvement of the intellect. But, while there is a readiness and desire to admit such, as are worthy, and evidence their faith and sincerity, by practising the duties enjoined in the Gospel, caution ought to be used against admitting the unholy and profane, within the pale of the church. If a church neglect, or abuse the ordinances of the Gospel, if they neglect a due attention to order and discipline, or at-

tend to them from a selfish, rancorous and party spirit, they are sure to be viewed, by the world, with contempt, and to be verging toward a state of ruin.

These observations being just, it will follow, that a Pastor cannot be said to fulfil the Ministry, if he neglect to administer the ordinances of the Gospel, with fidelity, and an attention to the order and discipline of the church. Faithfulness to Christ, and to the souls of men, requires, that he use his exertions to correct the errors, which may rise, among the people of his charge, relative to the ordinances.

VI. Taking heed to the Ministry, so as to fulfil it, implies, that a Pastor be prudent, peaceable, gentle, and affectionate, toward the people among whom he ministers.

The man of prudence guards against involving himself, in unnecessary controversies and difficulties. In reproof, and in giving advice and counsel, the man of prudence thinks first, and then speaks. He pays a due regard to the time, the manner, and the matter of his rebukes and counsels; and he makes it an object of his attention, to convey his instruction in that manner, which is most likely to reach the heart. In one, who is a watchman on Zion's wall, there is nothing, which can supply the place of prudence. Although one possess the knowledge and the zeal of the Apostle Paul, yet, if he be destitute of that prudence, with which wisdom dwells, he will be sure to involve himself in difficulties, not easy to be surmounted; and to defeat the design of his instructions. Said

Christ to his disciples, *Behold I send you forth, as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye, therefore, wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*

The Christian Pastor, while he unites the innocence of the dove with the caution, prudence, and wisdom, of the serpent, is under peculiar obligation to pursue those things, which make for peace. He, who is disposed to stir up contention and animosities, and to fan the fire of discord, will never fulfil the duties, which result from the pastoral relation. *Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*

Paul, in his second epistle to the Thessalonians, speaking of his own conduct, and that of their other Teachers, observes, *We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.* Gentleness seems here to be opposed to that forbidding air and deportment, which sets people at so great a distance, as to prevent their speaking with freedom, on subjects of the first importance, and with respect to which, they need and desire information. Gentleness is opposed to a hard, rugged, and austere, manner of address, by which, one wounds the feelings, and stirs up the prejudices of those, whose good he ought to seek. Gentleness is essentially connected with a spirit of patience and persevering attention to the good of one's charge, although they appear insensible of what is done for them, and frowardly oppose it. Gentleness is necessary, in the Christian Pastor, that he may accommodate himself to the

various tempers, conditions, and circumstances, of his flock; and that he may gain the attention of the froward; support the weak; bind up the broken hearted; and gather and feed the lambs. Gentle to all men, and apt to teach, are, by St. Paul, closely joined together, as if the one implied the other.

In order that a Pastor be gentle, among the people of his charge, as a nurse cherisheth her children, it is necessary, that he have an affectionate regard for them, and a general tenderness for their interests. Saith the Apostle to the Thessalonians, *Being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.* It would be absurd to admit, that any one will be faithful, as an Instructor, in any branch of business, or in any science, if he have not an affection for those under his care. The Christian Pastor will not be faithful, if he have no affection for his Flock and People. But, if he feel a tenderness for their interests, he will be solicitous for their welfare, apt to teach, ready to solve, so far as he is capable, the difficulties of the doubting, and to direct and assist serious inquirers, in their researches after truth.

VII. Taking heed to the Ministry, so as to fulfil it, implies, that a Pastor visit the sick, and by a constant example of integrity, honesty, and piety, reprove the vices of the age and place, in which he lives.

To visit the sick, and to converse and pray with them, is enjoined, by the Apostles, on the Preachers of Christianity. In his conversation with those,

who are laboring under infirmity, and who are made to drink of the bitter cup of affliction, the faithful Pastor will not fail to bring into view, the consolations, which religion affords to those, who are the children of God ; the solemnities of a coming life ; and the necessity of looking, beyond the present world, for permanent happiness. It is easy to apprehend, that for a Christian Pastor to devote his time to formal and ceremonious visits, would be inconsistent with the performance of those duties, which we have already traced. A proportion of his time may, with benefit to himself and others, be devoted to visiting ; but, if he act wisely, he will never let the proportion of time, devoted to this, be so great, as to interfere with the primary, and more essential duties of his profession.

From the known influence of example, no one can expect to produce any great effect, by preceptive instruction, whose example is the reverse of his precepts. Agreeably to an established law, in the moral world, example invariably has more influence, than precept. Our opinions, our mode of conduct, and our habits, are occasioned more by example, than by any, and every thing else. In proportion to the importance of the station and circumstances, in which one is placed, and the sphere, in which he acts, in the same proportion is his example of importance and consequence. Hence, the faithful Pastor cannot avoid feeling himself obligated, to manifest, in his life, an example, which shall harmonize with the laws of the religion he teaches. A Teacher of Christianity, who would

minge with the vicious and profane, and participate with them, in their scenes of mirth and festivity, can expect no benefit from the admonitions, which he may give to the vicious. They may, with propriety, say to him, "Physician, heal thyself." Hence, the justness of the admonition, Paul gave to Timothy, *Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*

Thus have we attended to a few sketches of the duties, which are implied, in taking heed to the Ministry, so as to fulfil it. In doing this, we have brought into view, the leading duties, which I am obligated to perform in relation to you; and have pointed to some of the marks, which designate the path, in which I ought to walk. Where the relation, between two, or more moral beings, is reciprocal, their duties are reciprocal. Of this kind is the relation, that subsists, between the Christian Pastor, and the Church and People, among whom he ministers. With all the duties enjoined on him, are connected correspondent duties, on their part. Hence, by a natural and easy deduction, may be traced your duties, as a Church and People, from what we have shown to be mine, as a Pastor, and religious Instructor. In this method, we shall bring into view, some of the leading duties of a Christian Church and People.

1. If it be necessary, that a Pastor take heed to his own heart, in order to fulfil the Ministry; then it is necessary, that a People take heed to their hearts, in order to be benefited by the Ministry.

The preaching of the Gospel, which exhibits the character and perfections of the Deity, and his laws and plan of government, in relation to us, as moral beings, will have a most solemn effect on every soul. As the rays from the source of day, tend to harden some substances, and to soften others, on which they fall, so the preaching of the Gospel, will, to every people where it is enjoyed, be the occasion of their increasing in a moral fitness for the kingdom of Heaven, or, through their inattention and neglect, it will be the occasion of their increasing in hardness of heart, and of enhancing their guilt and desert of punishment. To every individual, it will prove, in the final issue of things, a favor of life unto life, or, of death unto death. These different effects, of which the preaching of the Gospel is the occasion, are spoken of by Christ, in the parable of the sower and the seed; and are owing to the different relishes of heart, with which it is heard. For a people to be benefited by the preaching of the Gospel, it is necessary, that they attend to it, with an honest heart, and with a desire to know and obey the truth.

Although a people acquire a knowledge of all divine truth, and understand every part of the laws, government, and economy, of the moral system, yet they will be nothing benefited, if their hearts be not rightly affected toward God and man. It would be absurd to admit, that those, who retain the "carnal mind, which is enmity against God," will, in the closing scene of things, be profited, by a knowledge of the Gospel. Hence, the propriety of

the monitory counsel, which Christ gave to those, who attended his instructions, *Take heed what ye hear*—and in another place, *Take heed how ye hear*. The admonition given to Preachers, *to take heed to the Ministry*, is peculiarly forcible; and equally forcible, is the admonition to hearers, *Take heed how ye hear*.

To what cause shall we attribute the opposition, which the Jews manifested to the preaching of Christ? Why did they refuse to listen to his heavenly counsels, and to embrace, with love and gratitude, the religion of Heaven, and the Redeemer of the world? We can assign no other cause, than the hardness of their hearts, and their disaffection with moral rectitude, and the character of God. The judgments and calamities, which they were made to suffer, in consequence of this, stand as a perpetual warning, to all people, of the danger of their not taking heed to their own hearts, and the disposition, with which they attend to the preaching of the Gospel. Happy is that man, and happy is that people, who hear the word of God, and from the heart embrace and obey its precepts.

2. If it be the duty of a Christian Pastor, to devote his time and attention to the acquisition of knowledge; then it is the duty of a People, to contribute to his support.

That the Teachers of Christianity are to be supported, by those whom they instruct, may be argued from the principles of justice and equity, and from the Scriptures. Christ, when he sent forth the twelve Apostles to preach the Gospel, com-

manded them to make no provision for their support, as to food, clothing, or expenses in travelling, because they should be supported, by those whom they instructed. *Provide, said he, neither gold, nor silver, nor brags in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet slaves; for the workman is worthy of his hire.* St. Paul, expressing the will of his divine Master, observes, *Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they, which preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel.* And, in another place, he gives his express command, in these words, *Let him, that is taught in the word, communicate unto him, that teacheth, in all good things.* The example of Paul comports with these precepts. Notwithstanding he observes to the Ephesian, Thessalonian, and Corinthian Churches, that he labored with his own hands, lest he should be chargeable unto them, yet he tells the latter of them, that he took wages of other Churches to do them service, and that, what was lacking to them, the brethren of Macedonia supplied. Wages are a stipulated reward, or a hire according to a mutual agreement. In his first epistle to the same Church, he urges upon them, by an argument drawn from the Jewish method of supporting the Priesthood and religion of the Temple, the duty of supporting their religious Instructors. *Say I these things as a man, or saith the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox, that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care of oxen? or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes no doubt this is written; that he, that plougheth,*

should plough in hope ; and that he, that thresheth in hope, should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing, if we should reap your carnal things ? Do ye not know, that they, which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple ? and they, which wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar ? From these observations of the Apostle, and from Christ's saying, with direct application to the case in hand, that *the laborer is worthy of his hire*, we conclude it is the will of God, that a Church and People contribute to the support of their Pastor, and that they are obligated to do it ; for wherever the will of God is expressed to an individual, or people, it confers on them an obligation to conform to it. The Scriptures teach the duty of supporting religious Teachers, in the same manner, that they teach justice, benevolence, charity, and piety. These are taught by general rules, which are illustrated by occasional examples. This is the method, in which all practical sciences are taught. Hence, the particular method, in which a People shall support their Pastor, is not pointed out. That they are obligated to support him, is a point established by the will of God. The manner, in which they shall do it, is left to their mutual choice and agreement—with this injunction, however, *that there be an equality*, or that there be no injustice, but every one contribute according to his ability. Whether this be done, by a direct tax, by an established fund, or otherwise, is no further interesting, nor to be contended about, than one

method is more just, and will better obtain the end in view, than another.

From the known abilities of man, we conclude it is impossible, for any one to devote his attention to the acquisition of knowledge, so as to make any profitable proficiency, unless he have resources for his temporal support, which do not depend on his own manual labor. No People can expect much benefit from a Religious Teacher, who is idle and negligent, as to his professional business. But, this will be the case, with him, who is obliged to devote his attention to cultivating the earth, or any other kind of business foreign to his professional employment, in order to obtain those things, which are necessary for his daily subsistence. While he is obliged to do this, he will but very illy fulfil the duties of his office. Hence, on the principle of benefiting themselves, a people ought to contribute to the support of their Pastor, and to be punctual in fulfilling their engagements with him. Where a People neglect to do this, a Pastor is justifiable, on principles of justice and selfpreservation, if he neglect his professional business, and exert himself, in some other channel and employment, for his support. A neglect, on the part of a People, to fulfil with punctuality their contracts with their Pastor, is more commonly attended with bad consequences, on his part and theirs. It renders his circumstances embarrassed, and he is obliged to neglect, in some degree, the duties of his profession—that produces complaints in them, and leads on to an

unhappy, contentious state. But, if they be punctual, he can have no excuse, nor ground of complaint from that source.

The Christian Pastor has no more reason to expect miraculous assistance, or that religious knowledge be communicated to him by immediate inspiration, than a Physician has, that a knowledge of the nature and use of medicine, will be thus communicated to him. Religious knowledge was communicated to the Apostles, in a miraculous manner. They, also, had miraculous power to heal the sick, and raise the dead; and they were able to understand, and converse in different languages, without any study. As well might the Christian Pastor expect power to do these things, as that he shall obtain religious knowledge without study and exertion. This is the method, in which the Apostles supposed their successors must acquire knowledge, else why did they exhort them to give attendance to reading, meditation, and the like? But, if this be the case, they must receive their temporal support from some source, beside their own bodily exertions.

3. If it be the duty of a Christian Pastor to preach the religion of the Gospel; then it is the duty of a Church and People to attend to the religion of the Gospel, and to receive it in its purity.

It is from the command of God, which results from the structure and tendency of things, in his plan and kingdom, and from the sure relation, which an exhibition of divine truth has to the chief good of his kingdom, that arises the obligation on the Christian Pastor, to preach the Gospel in its purity,

and to declare the whole counsel of God. From the same source, it may be argued, that a People are obligated to attend to the religion of the Gospel, and to listen to the whole counsel of God. If Paul was under obligation to preach the doctrines, which he did, then his hearers were under obligations to embrace them. If he did right, in not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God, then they could not do right, unless they listened to the whole of his counsel. It would be absurd to admit, that Christ did right, in declaring to the Jews the truths and doctrines, which he did, and that they did right in rejecting them; or that the Apostles did right, in preaching the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, and that any of their hearers did right, in not embracing them. We can assign no reason, why a Pastor is obligated to preach the truths and doctrines of revelation, which does not apply with equal force, as a reason why it is the duty of a People to embrace them. Hence, if it be *my* duty to keep back nothing, which may be profitable unto you, and if it be *my* duty not to shun to declare the whole counsel of God; then it is *your* duty to listen to every thing, which may be profitable unto you, and not to shun to embrace the whole counsel of God. If *I* am directed what to preach, *you* are directed what to hear. If it be *my* duty to preach the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, it is *your* duty to hear and embrace them.

In connection with this, may be considered, the duty of a people to attend to the appointed means of acquiring a knowledge of moral and divine truths.

If it be the duty of a Christian Pastor to explain the Scriptures publicly, every Sabbath, then it is the duty of a People to attend and hear them explained, every Sabbath. No reason can be assigned, why a People are less obligated, than their Pastor, to attend to the public worship of God. Hence, if they, through negligence, inattention, or opposition to revealed truths, absent themselves from the public worship of God, they neglect their duty. A very little attention to the actual state of things, at the present period, is sufficient to convince any one, that the public worship of God is very much neglected; and that the duties of the Sabbath, are attended to with very great remissness. This presages no good to individuals—none to families—none to societies—none to our country—none to the souls of men.

It is a discouraging circumstance to a Preacher, when he enters the walls of the sanctuary, if he find but here and there one, who is disposed to attend upon his instructions. While he possesses the feelings of man, it will have influence in discouraging him. It will make him negligent. But, if the People, to whom he ministers, be in general disposed to attend upon his instructions, it will prompt him to exertion and fidelity. Hence, the propriety of the admonition, *Forfake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is.*

4. If a Christian Pastor be obligated to preach in a plain and convincing manner; then a People are obligated to hear such a manner of preaching.

There is something in the heart of man, which is averse to a plain, convincing method of preaching. This feature of the heart, is not peculiar to the present, or any particular period. It was visible in the days of the Prophets, of Christ, and the Apostles. It was this, which prompted the people to say to the Seers, *See not, and to the Prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things—speak unto us smooth things—prophefy deceits.* Whatever be the cause of it, we more commonly see, that a vicious man is averse to being reprov'd for his vices. He had rather be pass'd by in silence. But, that man, who censures and complains of his physician, because he lays open his wounds to save his life, acts an unwise and irrational part. Equally unwise and irrational is the part, which he acts, who censures and complains of a Preacher, because he lays open to him his real character and danger. If the Physician lay open the wounds of his patient, merely for the sake of causing him pain, he is censurable. Equally censurable is a Preacher, who is actuated by malevolence, in uttering truths in a plain, pointed manner. It is only from truth uttered without disguise, that a People can expect to be benefited. If it be for the benefit of the vicious to be reformed, and for the advantage of a People to have their real character explained, then ought they to assent to a plain, convincing manner of preaching. He, who acts on principles of reason and honesty, will ever be willing to hear the truth, with respect to himself. He wishes not to be flattered. He desires not deception, in matters, in which he is most deeply in-

terested. No one will justify the Prophets of old, who came to the people with smooth speeches, falsehood, and deception. No one will pronounce them innocent. But we might as well justify and declare them innocent, as we can the people, who desired them thus to prophesy, and who listened to their flattery and deception. How often were the Prophets of old, reproved and punished, for prophesying smooth things? And how often were the people reproved and punished, for listening to them? Happy is that People, whose language to the Seers is, *See, to the Prophets, Prophecy right things—speak unto us the truth, without disguise—declare unto us the testimonies of the Lord.*

5. If it be the duty of a Christian Pastor to administer the ordinances of the Gospel with impartiality, and to endeavor to promote the order and discipline of the Church; then it is their duty to receive them thus administered, and to cooperate with him, in seeking the promotion of order and discipline.

The rules, which Christ gave for the administration of the ordinances, and for the government of the Church, are as binding on every member of the Church, as they are on their Pastor. In this respect, *their* obligation is no less solemn than *his*. Hence, if the Scriptures point out, who the subjects of baptism are, and what are the requisite qualifications for church membership, then they point out for whom a Church ought to request baptism, and whom they ought to admit to Christian fellowship. From the injunctions of Christianity, from the im-

portance of order and discipline, to the well being of Christ's kingdom, and from the impossibility of a Pastor's doing any thing effectual, in this respect, unless the Church cooperate, may be inferred their obligation to be vigilant, and to use their endeavors to carry into practice the rules given by the Great Head of the Church.

6. If a Christian Pastor ought to be prudent, gentle, peaceable and affectionate, toward the People of his charge, and ever willing to give them instruction; then they ought to be prudent, gentle, peaceable and affectionate, toward him, and ever willing to listen to his instruction.

You may have seen those, among the professed Preachers of the Gospel, who have not practically manifested that prudence, gentleness, and peaceable disposition, which they ought. You may possibly have seen those, whose practice has tended to subvert the order and peace of societies. But, while you have seen this, if you have been accurate in your observations, you have likewise seen the order and peace of Churches and Societies subverted, by their own want of prudence, gentleness and a pacific disposition. No reason is assigned, why a Church and People are more justifiable for imprudence, a want of gentleness, and a contentious disposition, than is their Pastor. It has been peculiarly the lot of the Preachers of Christianity, to share in the censures and frowns of men; and to suffer much by the imprudence of those, among whom they dwell. They have very little reason to

expect to escape this, while human nature remains as it now is.

It is a mark of imprudence, and tends to destroy the peace and happiness of a People, for them, or any part of them, to censure with severity, what a Preacher has said in the pulpit, or elsewhere, without first going and conversing with him on the subject. It may be, and not uncommonly is the case, that the Preacher is not understood, according to his meaning. An accurate understanding, and just information of the matter, may wholly remove all ground and reason for censure. It is a mark of wisdom, as well as of prudence, never to judge nor censure another hastily. The man of reason and sound judgment, will never condemn another, without knowing that he is worthy of condemnation. That severity, with which some are apt to judge and censure a Preacher, who has not spoken agreeably to their mind, does by no means mark the man of prudence and gentleness. Its tendency is not to that which is good.

I request of you, therefore, as you regard your own peace and happiness, that if I, at any time, deliver that in the pulpit, or elsewhere, with which any one, or any number of you, is disaffected, you would come and converse with me. In this method, the difficulty may be removed. It may be a matter, to which you have not attended with perfect accuracy; or you may have misapprehended my meaning. I shall never designedly deliver any thing from the desk, which I do not believe is agreeable to reason and the word of God. If, on

your converſing with me, I find I have advanced that, which is not agreeable to them, I ſhall, as one who ſearches for truth with integrity, acknowledge my error with openneſs and frankneſs.

Another thing, which is evidential of a want of prudence and gentleneſs in a People, is their contending and diſputing, merely for the ſake of contending and diſputing; and not with a deſign to teach, or be taught. If the object of two or more diſputants, be to aſcertain the truth, it is good. But, if it be to ſupport, or obtain ſome favorite point, without regard to evidence, it never tends to any thing beneficial; but directly the reverse. Two men, let them think ever ſo widely apart, if they both deſire to know the truth of the caſe, will converſe together with perfect calmneſs, peace and frienſhip; and they may obtain peculiar benefit. Where diſputants contend with rancor and animofity, it is ſure they will be little benefited; and that they have loſt ſight of the object, they ought to keep in view. We very ſeldom ſee a Church, or Society, that practiſes warm and paſſionate diſputes, about religion, without being eſſentially injured. In ſuch Societies, we never ſee much religion practiſed. It is a privilege, almoſt peculiar to us of the preſent age, to examine and expreſs our religious ſentiments, without any reſtraint from the civil magiſtrate. We cannot put too high a value, upon this privilege. But, like every thing elſe that is good, in the hands of the licentious, it is liable to abuſe. It can, however, never be abuſed, but at the

hazard of the peace, and well being of Churches and Societies. As you regard, therefore, your peace and tranquillity, never engage in warm and rancorous disputes, on religious subjects. Let your only object be to ascertain a knowledge of the truth, and a knowledge of such truth, as will be beneficial. Be prudent, gentle, and peaceable, in all your conversation upon matters of a religious nature. No people can expect to be benefited, by the preaching of the Gospel, unless they pursue those things, which make for peace. The peaceable fruits of righteousness never grow, in the soil of contention and discord.

If, at any time, I shall be necessitated to converse, or dispute, with any of you, whose apparent design is not to ascertain the truth, but merely to try, or show, strength of abilities, I shall stand on the defensive, and wield the weapons of argument, with all the dexterity, of which I am capable. I most sincerely wish, never to have occasion thus to contend. I desire never to dispute, but for the sake of giving, or receiving instruction. Among a People, who are prudent, gentle, and peaceable, a Pastor will never have occasion to dispute with any other design.

7. If it be the duty of a Christian Pastor to visit the sick, and by a constant example of honesty, integrity, and piety, to reprove the vices of the age and place, in which he lives; then it is the duty of a People to receive such visits, and to listen to such examples.

Every Church and People have a right to expect and require of their Pastor, that he visit them when sick; and that he devote so much time to visiting them in general, as will not interfere with his other duties. But, they have a just right to complain of him, if he devote so much time to visiting, as to intrude upon his studies, and oblige him to bring unbeaten oil into the sanctuary. If a Church and People believe, that their Pastor designs to fulfil the duties of his office, they will not object to his judging, what proportion of time he can spend, in visiting them, without neglecting things of more consequence. You will not expect, that one, who is young in the profession of Divinity, can have that leisure, which those have, who are older, and more thoroughly versed in their professional business. I shall be ever ready to visit you, when oppressed with disease; and at other times, so often as I can, consistently with the fulfilment of other duties; of which I must claim the right of judging.

To one, who is professedly a Teacher of Christianity, a People have a perfect right to look for an example of integrity, honesty, and piety. But constant experience, as well as the language of the Scriptures, teaches, that no one is free from error, sin, and imperfection. In a moral point of view, no one can excuse himself for the committing of sins, either of thought, word, or deed. No one is excusable for setting a bad example. The Christian Pastor has a right to claim no more of the candor and charity of those, to whom he ministers, than is consistent with the laws of religion. So much, as

is consistent with these, he needs ; to so much he claims a right ; and so much he ought to experience, from the People, to whom he ministers. Candor consists, in a disposition to form a fair and impartial judgment of the opinions and actions of others. It is the opposite of prejudice, which is a judgment formed prior to examination. It is the opposite of bigotry, which is prejudice joined with a certain malignity. In this sense of the term candor, it is what we ought each of us to possess, and mutually exercise toward each other. It is peculiarly necessary, that a People possess a disposition to form a fair and impartial judgment of the opinions and actions of their Pastor. These constitute the example, he sets before them, and which they ought to follow, so far as they find, in the exercise of candor, that it agrees with the laws of religion.

Knowing my own imperfection, and liability to err, I request, that you would ever manifest toward me a spirit of candor. When you censure me, do it as friends ; and when you rebuke me, do it as brethren.

Having thus attended to a few sketches of the duties which I, as a Pastor, am to perform in relation to you, and which you, as a Church and People, are to perform in relation to me, I shall next address a few words to those, who are professedly the followers of Christ.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

PERMIT me to address you, as a brother and fellow candidate for immortality. To us, who

have publicly professed our belief of the Gospel, and covenanted to obey the laws, and follow the examples of our God and Saviour, the world look, for something more than is seen in others. Christianity ever has, and ever will appear to the world, much according to the influence it has upon those, who are its professed friends. From their example, the world mean to determine, whether or not, there be any thing in religion. If they neglect the same duties, practise the same vices, and pay as little regard to the laws of Christianity, as others do, they are sure to be appellated, and that deservedly, with the opprobrious epithet of hypocrites, and the cry is sure to be raised, that religion is all a farce. "Christianity is not merely theoretical; it is vital, experimental, practical. Every thing short of this is children's play, or something worse. A Pagan, a Jew, or a Mahometan, has less to answer for than such Christians, as believe only in Jesus Christ and the Scriptures, as they do in Julius Cæsar, or Tacitus." The religion of Christ has received some of its deepest wounds, from the conduct and examples of some of its professed friends. We, therefore, as we regard the worth of that religion, to which we have declared ourselves friends, as we regard the solemnity of the covenant we have taken upon us, the happiness of men, and the good of Christ's kingdom, must feel ourselves under high and peculiar obligations to live a life of holiness, and the practice of Christianity. We cannot innocently omit obedience to the precepts and examples of Christ.

The God, whom we own to be ours, and whom we worship, is a God of peace, of order, and love. While discord, contention, and hatred, are the unchangeable characteristics of the powers of darkness, the kingdom of God consists in righteousness and peace. The spirit of Christ's religion is a spirit of meekness, of peace, and humility. That fervent *charity* and good will, which ought to reign among us, shone in full lustre in the face of Jesus Christ. At his birth, the angels of heaven, in prospect of the destruction of the kingdom of darkness, and the future triumphs of the cross, united in proclaiming, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.* The graces and virtues, which he possessed and practised, form a perfect pattern, for our imitation, in practice. He commanded his disciples, that they should love one another, assuring them, that this should be the criterion, by which they should be distinguished, in all ages of the world. *Hereby shall men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one toward another.—Behold how good and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: For there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life forevermore.* We must, hence, feel our obligation to love one another, with the love of brethren, and to live together in unity.

The prosperity of every Church depends much, on the order and discipline, which they observe. It is to be regretted, that these, at the present day, are very much neglected. If, among you, my brethren, these things have been heretofore attended to with remissness, or in any degree neglected, it is the more necessary, that you now redouble your exertions, and endeavor to obtain that discipline, and establish that order, which become the Christian Church. Be not dismayed, because your numbers are few. He, in whose hands are the hearts of all men, can make this part of his Zion prosper. Confiding in his promises, we must look to him to display his power and grace, in directing us in the paths of holiness, and in bringing in those, who are to participate in the joys of the heavenly world.

Young in the labors of Christ's vineyard, you will not expect from me that accurate knowledge and acquaintance, in relation to the order and discipline of the Church, which is possessed by those, who are older stewards. All my endeavors will be of little avail, unless you cooperate with me, in exertions to support that order, which Christ has enjoined. Let me assure you, that I will gladly spend and be spent for you. As a brother and Teacher, let me possess your confidence. Watch over me, and over one another, with the eye and spirit of Christians. Forget me not, in your supplications to the God of heaven. Correct my errors with a brotherly affection. Be kindly affectioned one toward another; and let us take heed, that we fall not out by the way.

To you, who are parents and have the care of the young, permit me next to suggest a few thoughts.

From the affection, you possess for your offspring, it is very natural to conclude, that you are solicitous for their welfare, and willing to pursue any measures, which will be promotive of their happiness. Such is the economy of Divine Providence, that their present and future felicity is, in a very high degree, suspended, on the example, you exhibit before them, and the instruction you give them. The principal part of the instruction, which they receive from you, is from your example. This is the only method, in which those, in infancy and childhood, are capable of being instructed. Hence, you find it necessary, to set before them examples, of what you wish to impress upon their minds. In them, there is a propensity to imitate; an aptness to follow examples. By practice, imitation becomes habitual. Habits once formed, are not easily eradicated. Hence it is, that those, who have exercised the principle of imitation, in early life, in following particular examples, are apt to follow them through life. Almost every habit, which we have in mature life, is established, while we are under the care, and tuition of our parents. Hence, every parent ought to view his conduct and principles, as forming not only his own character, but as infallibly tending to form that of his offspring. In your own lives, practice, and sentiments, you, who are parents, may see portrayed the future lives, practice, and sentiments of your rising offspring. Your

example in speech, action, and sentiment, is constantly before them. It is that, which they mean to follow ; for it is to your method, in every thing, that they look for a pattern. The child always thinks, it has sufficient authority for doing, what is done by its parents, and for believing, what they believe. It always thinks, it has sufficient authority, for omitting, what they omit, and disbelieving, what they discredit.

Hence it is, that the peace, order, and prosperity of every Society, depend more on family government, and the example and conduct of parents, in relation to their children, than on any and every thing else. In the government and education of your children, and the example you exhibit before them, you are sowing the seeds of future prosperous families, and of a future prosperous Society, that shall regard the laws of order, of God, and religion ; or, you are sowing the seeds, and laying the foundation of future contentious families, and of a licentious Society, that shall disregard the laws of God, of order, and religion.

All the instruction you are capable of giving your children by precept, will have very little influence, unless your examples accord with your precepts. If you accustom yourselves to profane language, they will be profane. If you are licentious, and practise intemperance, they will be licentious and intemperate. If you cast off fear, and restrain prayer, they will do the same. If you treat the Bible, the Sabbath, and the worship of God,

with neglect and contempt, you are almost sure, that they will neglect and despise them. Whatever vice you practise, they will practise. Whatever duty you neglect, they will neglect.

On the other hand, if you live lives of holiness, if you venerate the name of God, his word, his Sabbath, and worship, and practise the duties of religion, you will not fail to have influence in directing those, who are most dear to you, in the paths of wisdom and peace.

You, therefore, cannot avoid feeling yourselves under high and peculiar obligations, to take heed to the examples, which you exhibit before those, whom God, in his goodness, has committed to your care, and the sentiments you teach them. As you regard their happiness, your own obligations, the future prosperity of this Society, the good of your country, and the laws of God, do not omit to set before them good examples, and to give them the instruction of wisdom. By your examples and precepts, impress on their minds a belief of the worth and importance of the Christian religion. Enjoin upon them a strict attendance upon the duties of the Sabbath, and the worship of God. Teach them to venerate his name, and to behave with decency, and propriety, when within the walls of the sanctuary. Direct them to amusements which are innocent. Select for them proper books for their perusal. Both by your precepts and examples, establish in them a habit of reading; particularly of reading the Scriptures. Warn them of the danger of imbibing the poison of infidelity. Warn them

against profanity, intemperance, unchastity, idleness, licentiousness, and vices of every kind. Warn them of the danger of continuing in a state of unreconciliation to the God of grace, and in a neglect of religious duties. Be unto them an example, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

It is to be regretted, that family worship is so much neglected, as at the present day. Instances occur, and would to God they were less frequent, in which family prayer is wholly neglected. If any of you, who are parents and heads of families, have heretofore neglected this important duty, be entreated to neglect it no longer. Pray with and for your families. Let your practice evince, that you have taken upon you the resolution of the pious leader of Israel, *As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*

While I continue among you, it will be a peculiar source of happiness, to see you training up your offspring, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This will afford a degree of assurance, that order and peace will be perpetuated among you; that the laws of God and religion will be regarded; and that a happy immortality will be the portion of your offspring.

Permit me next to suggest a few thoughts, to you, who are in the morning of life.

DEAR YOUTH,

YOU have received your existence, at a time, and in a place, peculiarly favorable for the acquisition

of knowledge, and the improvement of your minds. You have access to books of almost every kind ; and may have intercourse, with all classes of men. In this respect, your advantages are far above any, who have gone before you. For this, you cannot feel too grateful to the God of heaven ; nor can you too sensibly feel your obligations to improve your mental powers, by furnishing yourselves with every kind of useful knowledge. At no period of your lives, will your conduct be of so much consequence, as it now is. The habits, you now acquire, and the principles, you now embrace, will probably be retained through life. If these be virtuous and pure, you may expect a prosperous journey through life ; but, if they be vicious and corrupt, you may expect scenes of pain and darkness. Hence, you may view yourselves, as now establishing the character, which you are to retain through life, and as marking out your future destination to happiness, or misery. You will readily accede to this, if you attend to the established connection of events, in the government of the moral world. As to his habits and principles, you seldom see the man of sixty, differing from what he was at forty ; nor the man of forty, differing from what he was at twenty. If any thing can dignify those, who are young, it is a fixedness in the practice of virtue, and a firm attachment to the principles of religion. From such, we have much to expect. But, we have very little, that is worthy of praise, to expect from those, who begin life, in the practice of vice, and early advocate the principles of licentiousness. From

such, we have much to fear. Hence, you cannot be too attentive to your conduct; nor too vigilant, that you do not embrace licentious principles.

You hear much said about religion; and much controversy about religious tenets. You hear some speaking of the Scriptures, in terms of the most pointed contempt and ridicule; boasting that this is the age of reason; ridiculing those, whose professional business is to explain the doctrines of Christianity; and accusing them, as being an idle, useless set of men. But, before you embrace the tenets of such, pause and examine. See if you have any reason to conclude, that they are seeking your present, or future happiness. Examine the character of those, who treat the Scriptures, and the religion and worship of God, with contempt, and see if they are living the happiest life, even on supposition there were no life beyond the present. See if they regard the happiness of man, or have the fear of God before their eyes. Examine into the effects, that would follow, were the Bible destroyed. Search out the causes of infidelity. Examine into the evidences of the Christian religion. Pause, and examine thoroughly, before you reject the religion, which was proclaimed by the Son of God; which alone opens to you a future state of existence; and directs you the path to a happy immortality.

Christianity does, by no means, shrink back from, but it invites, the closest examination. Your good sense and judgment will tell you, that he, who rejects Christianity, without examination, acts the part of extreme folly; and that he cannot possess

any great strength of intellect, who would be drawn into a disbelief of the Bible, by the sarcasms of a Paine, or the dreams of a Volney, whose thoughts were mixed with wormwood, and whose pens were dipt in gall.

You are now at an age, in which, you are exceedingly liable to be drawn into the practice of vice. Beware of your danger, and practice caution and vigilance. Remember, that it is an established maxim, in the divine government, that vice shall be connected with, and followed by misery ; and that virtue, or holiness, shall be connected with, and followed by happiness. Shun those, who wantonly trifle, with the name of their Maker. Pity the youth, who trifles with the name of God ; use your endeavors to reform him ; and exhibit an example of purity, decency, and propriety in language, before your companions.

Never associate yourselves with those, who practice gaming. From such, you can expect no good. You can never expect to rise into esteem and respectability, among men, by gaming. It will infallibly sink you, in view of the good and the virtuous ; it will render you less worthy, in view of the vicious ; and will infallibly render the account, you must give, at the last day, peculiarly solemn. Avoid the company of those, who accustom themselves to intemperance. Intemperance leads on to every other kind of vice. It generally proves fatal to the interest, to the body, and the soul. If you acquire a habit of intemperance, you may be sure, beforehand, that you will not easily lay it aside.

Avoid the unchaste and licentious. Never indulge yourselves, in any amusement, which tends to corrupt the morals, or the heart. Of this kind, are all amusements, which are connected with, or tend to, that which is vicious. As you regard your own present, or future felicity, and the laws of your Maker, never indulge yourselves, in the practice of any known vice.

Improve every moment, to some valuable purpose. Cultivate an intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures. Reverence the name, the laws, and the worship of God. Devote your time, on the Sabbath, to the duties and business of religion. Live in the constant practice of the duty of prayer. Cherish a sense of your accountability to God, and of your need of the renovating influences of his divine Spirit. Forget not the debt of gratitude, you owe to your parents. Treat them with kindness and respect. Listen diligently to their counsels and admonitions. Accustom yourselves to look forward to the hour of death, and to contemplate the scenes, that will follow. Early consecrate your time and your talents to the service of God, and your fellow men. You are now the hope of your parents. From you they expect much. Make them happy, by living lives of religion and sobriety, and by preparing to fill their places with dignity, when they shall be sleeping in the dust. Remember, that the eyes of your God are upon you, and that you are not beings of a day, but are formed and acting for a state of immortality. Accept, without delay, of

the salvation offered in the Gospel, and secure to yourselves a state of endless joy and felicity.

All present will readily apprehend, that the duties of a Christian Pastor, are peculiarly arduous, and that the duties of a Church and People, are important and numerous. Impressed with a belief of this, and that we must, one day, appear face to face, at the solemn tribunal of our final Judge, to give an account how we have performed our respective duties, may we, through the grace of God, so act our parts, as to meet in peace, and enter upon that rest, which remains for those, who are washed and purified from their sins, and who cease not to ascribe praise to Him, that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb.

